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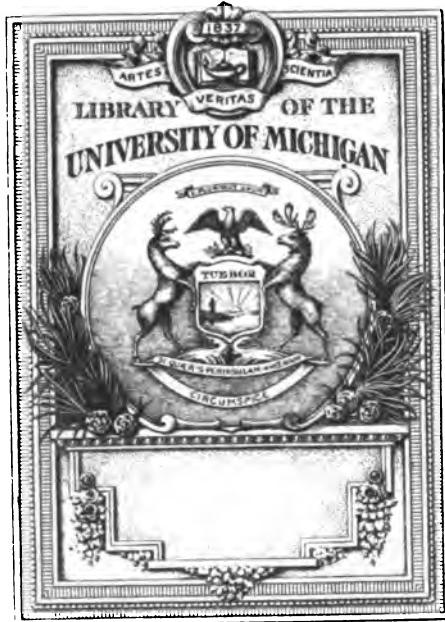
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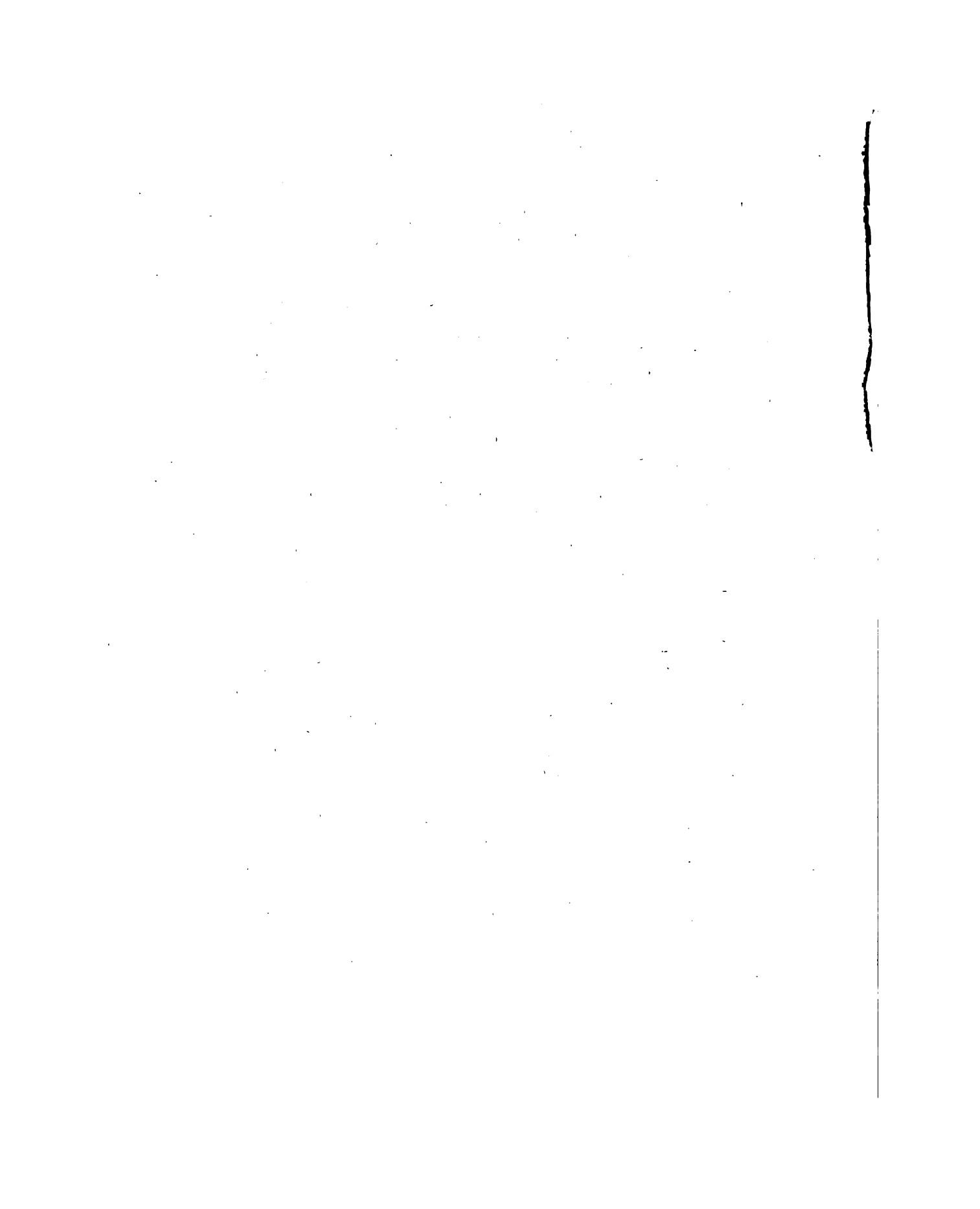
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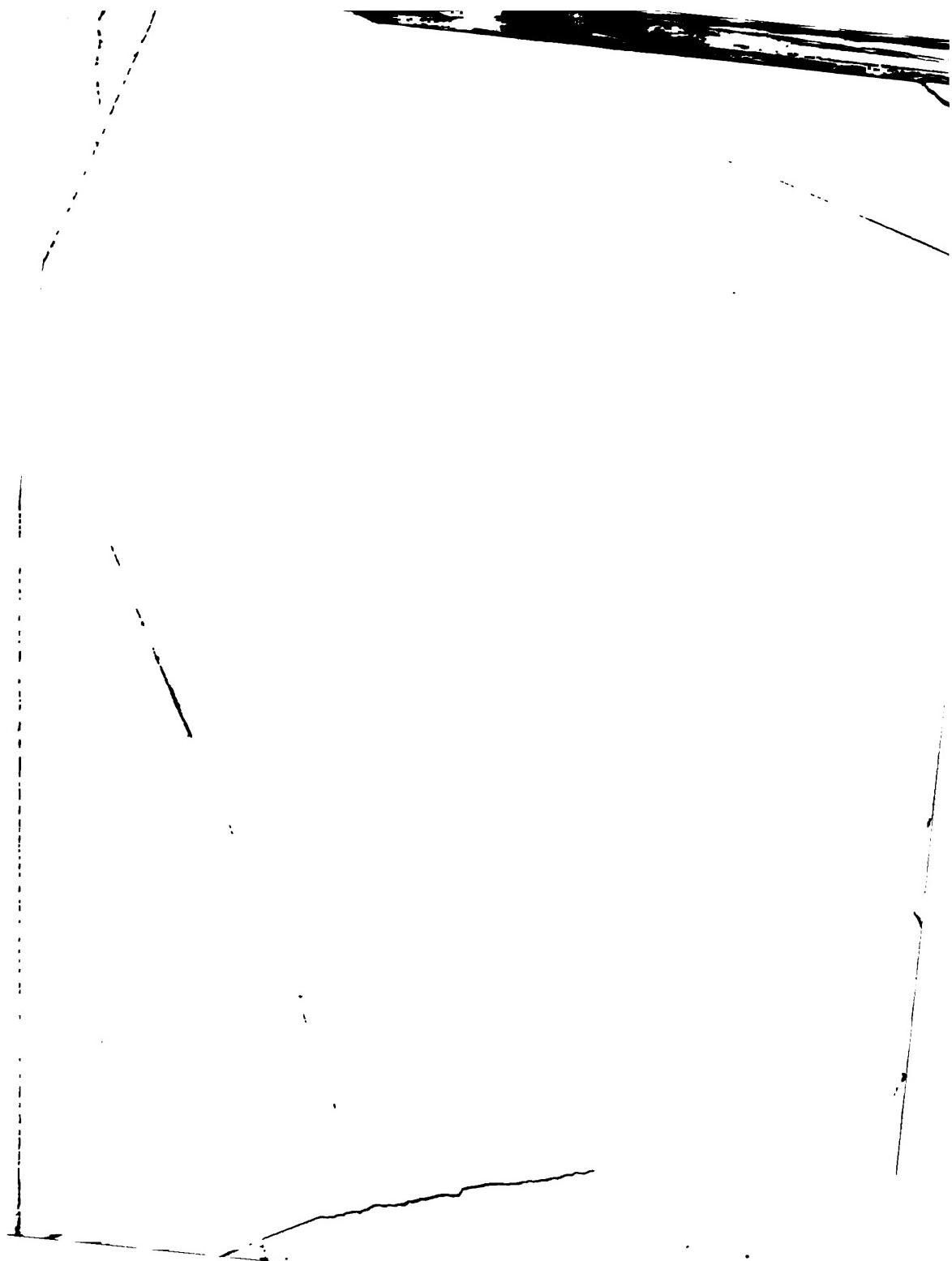
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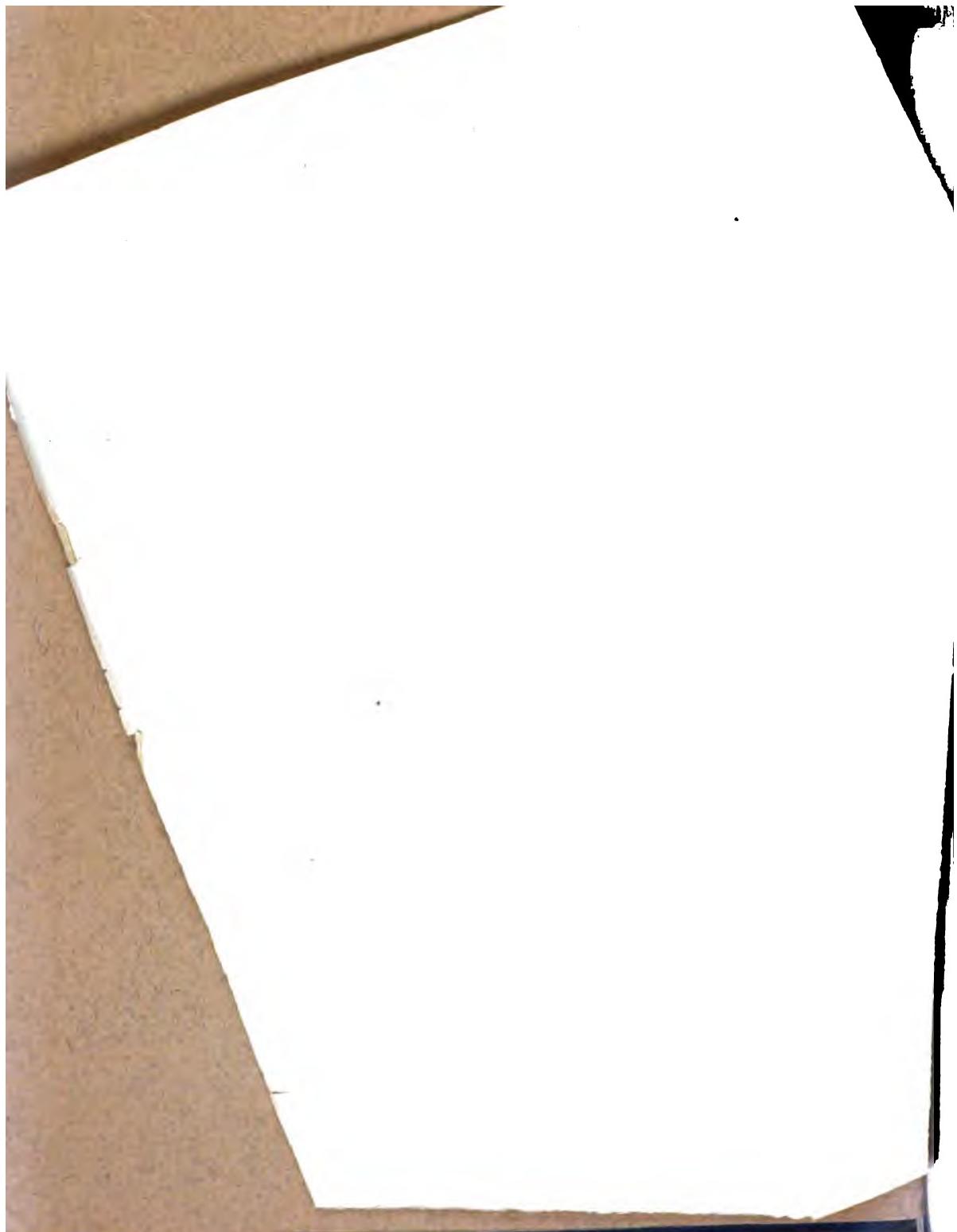
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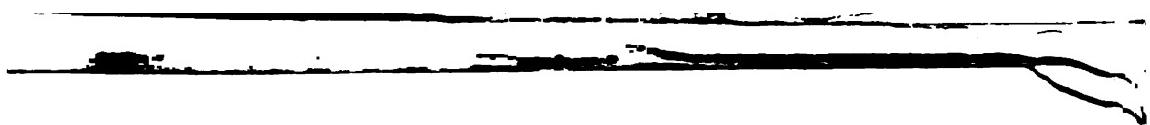


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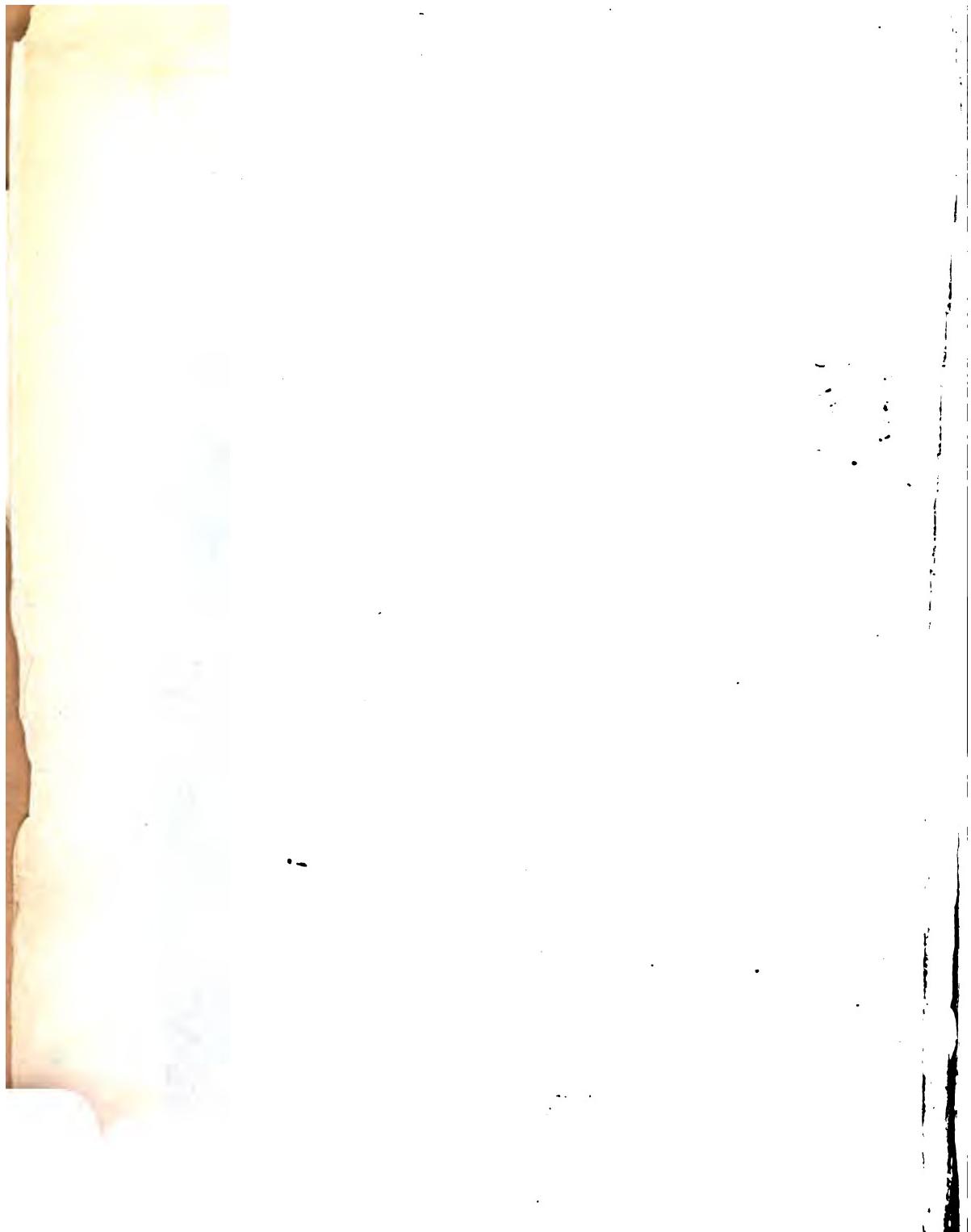












Chanson de Roland

The Song of Roland,

49244

AS CHANTED BEFORE

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS,

By the Minstrel Taillefer.

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM."

Mrs. Anne Marsh

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The Song of Roland.

INTRODUCTION.

IT was upon the 13th of October, 1066—
The armies of Harold of England and William of Normandy met upon the plain of Hastings. But, before they came to blows, a Norman knight issued from the ranks, and spurring his horse in front of the battle-array, animated his fellow-countrymen to conquer or die, as, in a loud voice, he chanted forth the Song of Roland.

This incident is no poetical invention. All the historians most worthy of credit make mention of it. William of Malmsbury,

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Matthew Paris, Ralph Higden, Alberic de Trois Fontaines, all speak of this celebrated song of the Carlovingiens as inaugurating the battle of Hastings, and as being repeated with one voice by the soldiers.

Even the very name of the intrepid Trouvère is recorded, who thus sang forth between the armies. He was called Taillefer, and was a follower of the Count de Mortain.

There have been many songs written upon this subject of Roncesvalles, and the death there, of the renowned Roland, Paladin of the still greater Charlemagne. All of them, however, with which, until lately, the world had been made acquainted, bore undoubted evidence that they were composed long subsequent to the date of the Conquest—which took place three centuries below the times of the great Emperor.

At Paris, at Lyons, at Metz, and at Cambridge, versions of the Song of Roland had been long known to exist; but each one

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Instruction, immediately dispatched M. Francisque Michel to Oxford, who made a copy of the manuscript, and, in the course of two years, brought out an edition of it.

That the text of this manuscript was anterior to those of Paris, Lyons, Metz, or Cambridge, appeared to admit of no dispute. The changes that take place in a language, in what may be called the earlier stages of its formation, are such, that it is much more easy than at later periods, to affix the date of any writing, from that circumstance alone. The French language, at the time in question, was in the most crude and immature state; and the judges competent to examine into the subject affirm without hesitation, that the Song of Roland found in the Bodleian cannot belong to a period later than the eleventh century.

The language is, indeed, precisely the same with that of the laws of William the Conqueror, whilst the construction, versification,

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as we said bore indubitable evidence, both as regarded the language and construction, that they belonged to a later age—to the twelfth, the thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

It had become a question of considerable interest among antiquarians whether the identical Song of Roland, as chanted at the battle of Hastings, were still in existence. At length, it has been discovered; and, singularly enough, it is by a learned Frenchman, that it has been drawn forth from the Bodleian Library at our own University of Oxford. It appears that the existence of a manuscript answering to this description had been slightly noticed by Tyrwhitt, in a note to his edition of the "Canterbury Tales."

This note, and the existence of the manuscript in question, were first announced to the literary world of France by the Abbé de la Rue, in his Essay, "Sur les Trouvères Normands;" upon which announcement, M. Guizot, at that time Minister of Public

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and whole tissue of the story, are of the utmost simplicity—so that a comparison with the more elaborate poems upon the same subject belonging to a later era, will at once satisfy the critical reader that this before us bears the impress of those times and manners to which it professes to belong.

As regards the author of this poem, all that can be told is, that the name of Tuoldus is found appended to the last verse. But the question arises whether this be the name of the author, or merely that of the copyist.

If of the author, who was this Tuoldus ?

The preceptor of William the Conqueror bore that name. He died in 1033. But there was another Tuoldus, son or nephew of the first-mentioned. He was a Benedictine of the Abbey of Fécamp, and accompanied the Conqueror to England. After having rendered considerable services, he was

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made Abbot of Malmsbury and subsequently of Peterborough.

Now it is a curious circumstance connected with this latter fact, as reported by Gunton, that among the manuscripts of the Abbey of Peterborough, there were anciently discovered two copies of a French poem upon the War of Roncesvalles ("De Bello Valle Runciæ"), and it appears most probable that one of these it is, which has found its way to the Bodleian.

Ten years after M. Michel had published his edition of the poem in its original antique language, M. Génin undertook to give the world a translation of it; but unfortunately this gentleman chose for his medium the French language as it existed in the time of Amyot, which, though admirably calculated to convey an idea of the simplicity and energy of the original, yet has become so far obsolete as to require itself a translation to make it accessible to those not versed in French antiquity.

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This has been undertaken by M. Vitet, and as far as I may presume to judge, with admirable success. His version of this singularly beautiful poem has been lately given to the world in the "Revue des Deux Mondes."

I was so charmed with the work, that I could not refrain from endeavouring, in my turn, to render M. Vitet's delightful French version into the best English I could attain to, thus making the poem (which, by rights, belongs to both nations) our own as well as theirs.

I have not succeeded nearly so well as I could have wished; but such as it is, I submit my attempt to the public, thinking that, in an age like the present, it may not be amiss to bear to English hearths this simple and touching record of the loyalty and bravery, the truth and warm affection, and the fervent though somewhat rude piety of those who became our ancestors.

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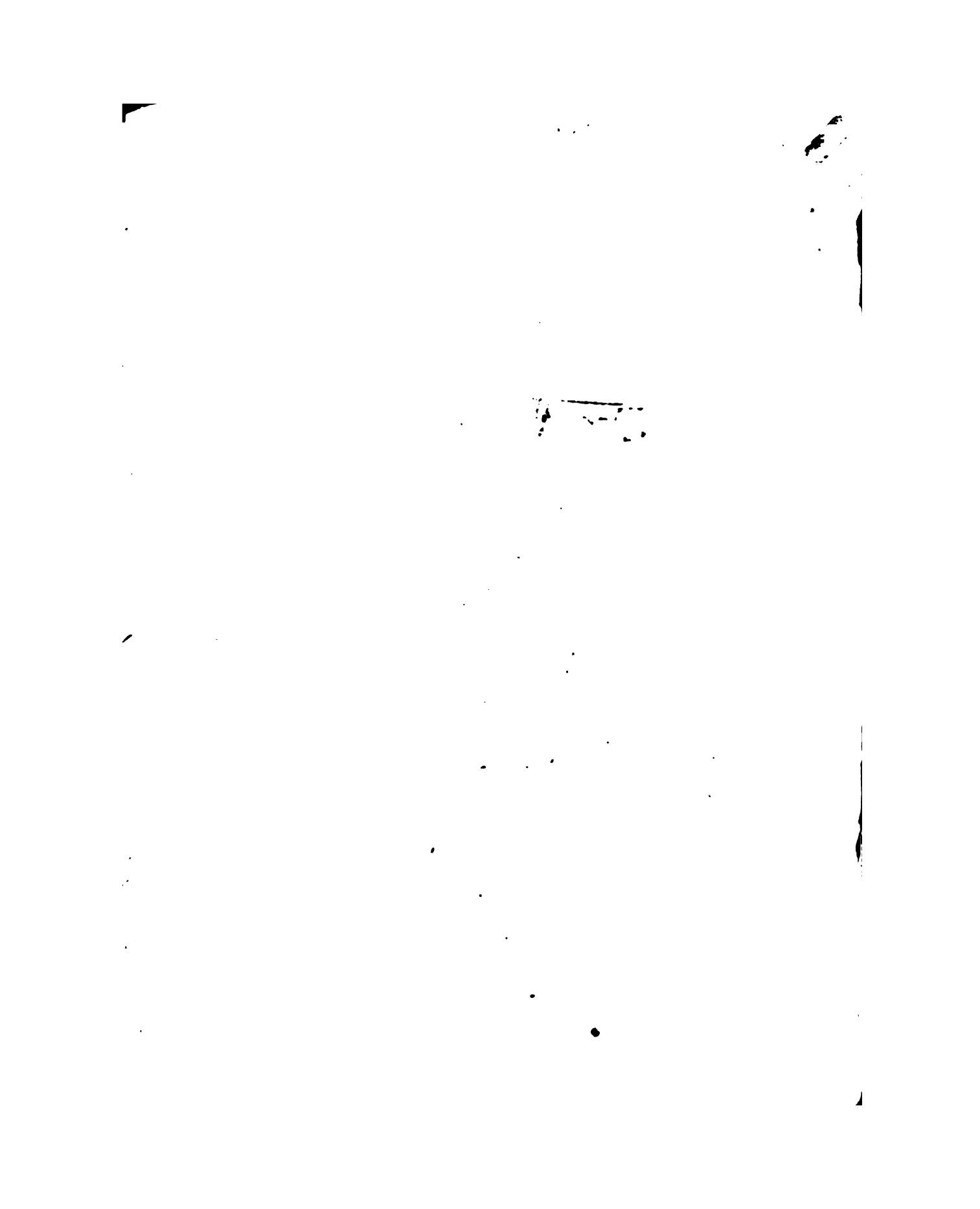
The poem contains about four thousand verses; but it has not been given at full length by M. Vitet, who thus expresses himself upon the subject:

“It might have been better, doubtless, to have translated the whole, but this our limits did not permit. We have contented ourselves with a rapid exposition of what was merely secondary and accessory but we have endeavoured to reproduce the principal parts of the work—what may be called the heart of the subject—with complete integrity. These we have translated faithfully, without abbreviation, or the least alteration in what, perhaps, may be called the most ‘naïves’ anachronisms, or the most credulous hyperboles.”

I have, for myself, most scrupulously adhered to the same plan as regards M. Vitet’s translation, and have not allowed myself in the slightest deviation from the most careful adherence to the simplicity of my original.

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I must here take the occasion to offer my sincerest thanks for the politeness and liberality with which M. Vitet has authorized me to publish my translation, and then, without further delay, will begin, as he himself does, with the first lines of the ancient poem.



The Song of Roland.

KING CHARLES, our great Emperor, seven
years hath warred in Spain.

No castle so strong that can him resist—
no walled town but its gates have opened before
him. Saragossa alone holds out—Saragossa !
—standing high upon the mountain—there
where the infidel reigns — Marsilio, servant
of Mahomet and Apollyon—He who adoreth
not God ; so evil shall be his doom.

Within his orchard, under the shade of
green branches, the King Marsilio reposes,
and rests against a block of marble. More

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than twenty thousand warriors are lying there around him. Of his dukes and his counts he is asking counsel—answering and saying : “ How shall we escape death or insult ? Our army hath not force to overcome in battle ; what shall be done therefore ? ”

But no man answered a word.

Save one.—He, the subtle Blancandrín, he ventured to address himself to speak ; and thus he said :

“ Feign submission—Send to this proud King and Emperor. Send chariots laden with silver and with gold. Furthermore, promise him, so he return to France, that there thou wilt follow and rejoin him.—Yea, at Aix, in his chapel, on the great feast of Saint Michael, there wilt thou be—there wilt thou receive the Christian law, and yield thyself his liegeman. Asks he hostages, we will give them. Yea, our wives and children — At the risk of her life, I will send mine. When the Frenchmen shall be far away,

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each one returned to his own hearth, then the day appointed shall arrive — but the hour shall pass — and of thee Charles shall hear not one word. The Felon ! Perchance he will shorten the hostages by a head!—but better they to lose their heads, than we our beautiful Spain!"

And all those Pagans to answer and say :
" Well hath he spoken !"

The King Marsilio has broken up his Council. At his command ten sumptuous mules approach. Fair and white are they ; their bits are of gold, their housings of the silver.

And thus Marsilio spake to Blancandrín, and to nine others of his liegemen :

" Go—go, to meet Charles. Bear in your hands the olive-branches, signs of submission and peace. If through your cunning me from him you deliver, what gold, and what silver ! What lands shall I on you bestow ?"

And so the messengers mount their mules and take their way.

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The scene now changes to Cordova. It is there that Charles holds his court. He also is in his orchard, and at his side are seen Roland, Olivier, Geoffrey of Anjou, and many others—all sons of sweet France. There are fifteen thousand of them, and more.

Seated on the silken stuffs, they pass the time in play. The more sage and aged at the chess, the young bachelors lightly skirmishing among themselves. The Emperor is seated in a golden chair under the shade of an eglantine and of a pine-tree; his beard is white as the driven snow, his body is nobly shaped and framed, his brow of majesty. Whoso seeketh him—needs none to point him out.

The Pagan messengers have descended from their mules, and humbly have they saluted the Emperor. Then Blancandrín takes up the word, and he displays before Charles the rich and great treasures that

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his master hath sent by his hand; and then he answers and says—

“ Is it not enough? Art thou not weary of this our land?—Return then to thy France, and there the Lord our King will pledge his faith to follow thee.”

But the Emperor raised his hands to God—then bending down his head, he began to muse. Such was his custom. Ever slow to speak. At last he raised his head, and thus the messengers he addressed:

“ Thou hast well spoken, but thy King is my great enemy.—Who will assure me the good faith of these thy words?”

“ Hostages,” replies the Saracen. “ Thou shalt have ten—ay, fifteen—ay, twenty. Mine own son shal’t thou have. What hostage—what more noble assurance can we offer? When in France thou shal’t be —and seated in thy lordly palace, at the great feast of Saint Michael, then my master will follow thee—Yea, there—even in those

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baths, which God to thee hath given—there will he be made a Christian."

And Charles to answer :

" It may be, that so his soul shall yet be saved."

The day shines fair—the sun is bright. In his orchard Charles commands to raise a sumptuous tent for these the ten messengers. So there they pass the night.

At break of day the Emperor arises. First he hears mass and matins, and then he comes under the shadow of the great pine-tree to hold council with his Barons—for nothing without them will he do.

And soon they are all come together. And there was the Duke Oger, and the Archbishop Turpin, and Roland, and the

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brave Olivier, and Ganelon—he who should betray them all.

And so then the Council was opened.

Then Charles rehearsed to his Barons the words of Blancandrin, saying :

“Think ye Marsilio will in verity come to Aix? — Will he in good faith become a Christian? — Will he yield himself my vassal? — For me—I know not what to think.”

And all the Frenchmen to answer :

“ Beware !”

Then arose Roland, and thus spake he :

“ Put no faith in Marsilio—Behold, these seven years have we warred in Spain, and what else in Marsilio have we found, but treason? Did not fifteen thousand of his Pagans approach bearing branches of the olive—speaking as these ones do this day? Did not thy Counsellors engage thee to make truce? And what did Marsilio?—Two of thy Counts he beheaded—Basan, and

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Basilio his brother. Make war.—Make it as thou didst determine it. Lead forward thine army to Saragossa—and revenge whom this felon hath slain.”

Dark grows the face of the Emperor as he listens. He strokes his beard, but answers nothing. And all the Frenchmen hold silence. Save Ganelon,—he, with haughty mien, arises, advances towards the Emperor, and this discourse he holds :

“ Give no heed to headstrong counsel—Give heed neither to mine nor to that of any one. Regard only thine own advantage. When Marsilio sends to thee with joined hands, saying he will be thy liegeman,—holding all Spain in fief from thee, and receiving our holy law—dare they counsel thee these things to refuse ! Little care they for the death that we may die ! Counsel of pride ! which ought not to prevail.—Let us not share in the madness of fools, but listen to the words of the wise.”

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And after Ganelon had thus spoken, came forward the Duke Naymes.

The Court containeth not a more valiant warrior. And thus spake Naymes to Charles :

“Thou hast heard the words of Count Ganelon—behoves thee to weigh them well. The King Marsilio is vanquished. His castles thou hast razed, his ramparts overthrown ; his towns in ashes lie, and scattered are all his hosts. When he renders himself to thee thus, crying ‘Mercy,’—surely to destroy him were sin.—Not longer should terrible strife endure.”

And the Frenchmen to say :

“Well hath the Duke spoken.”

“Lords Barons,” asks Charlemagne, “whom, then, shall we send to Saragossa—to the King Marsilio ?”

And Naymes to answer :

“So, by thy grace, go there will I. Give me the glove and bâton.”

“Not so,” quoth the Emperor.

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by my beard. A wise man like thyself, to go so far away from me!—Thou shal't not go.—Return thee to thy place again."

"Say then, Lords Barons, whom shall we send?"

"I!" says Roland.

"Thou!" cries Olivier, "Thy courage is too vehement, thou wilt only embroil thyself and us.—So please the King, I am well contented to go."

"Nor thou—nor he. Silence, both of ye. No one of my twelve peers shall put his foot in this."

So, at these words, all were silent.

At last Turpin arose, Turpin, the Archbishop of Rheims.

In his turn he demands the glove and bâton; but the Emperor commands him to be seated and to say no more. Then once again addressing his Barons, he says:

"Knights! Franks! Will no one say me who shall bear this message to Marsilio?"

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And Roland answered and said :

“ Ganelon, my step-father, 'tis he shall bear it.”

And the Frenchmen :

“ He is the man.—Thou canst not an abler find !”

But at these words, terrible is the anguish of Ganelon. His great mantle of martens' fur he lets fall from his shoulder, and then, behold ! his noble form is seen, arrayed in silken vest. His eye sparkles with choler.

“ Madman !” cries he to Roland, “ Whence this enmity and rage?—So please God that I return, be sure, so long as I shall live, against thee will I remember this.”

“ I heed not thy menaces,” answers Roland. “ Thy pride deprives thee of reason. A wise messenger is here needed—So, please the Emperor, in thy place I go.”

“ Nay, but I will go!” quoth Ganelon. “ Charles commands—mine is it to obey. A little space, however, will I defer my

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departure were it but to digest my choler."

And at that, Roland began to laugh, and Ganelon saw that he laughed, and his fury was redoubled, until he was as one possessed,—and bitter words he flung at his step-son; and then he turned himself to the Emperor, and thus he spake:

"Here stand I, ready to fulfil thy commands.—Full well know I that to Saragossa I must go, and who goeth to Saragossa returneth not again.—Forget it not, Sire, the husband of thy sister am I. By her I have a son—no fairer in the world. The day will come when Baldwin shall be valiant! To him leave I my fiefs and my domains. Watch over him faithfully—for as for me—I shall behold his face no more."

"Thy heart is tender," quoth Charles. "But when I command, go thou must needs. Draw near, Ganelon, receive the bâton and the glove. Didst thou not hear?—It

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was our Franks themselves that named thee."

" Nay, nay, Sire ; this is a trick of Roland's—and therefore do I hate him—him and his dear Olivier, and the twelve peers that love him well !—And thus I defy them, one and all, before thine eyes."

But the Emperor bade him hold his peace, and commanded that he should set forward.

So Ganelon drew near to take the glove from the hand of Charlemagne—but, lo ! the glove fell to the ground.

" God !" cried the Frenchmen, " what presage is this ?"

" My Lords," answers Ganelon, " be ye sure ye shall have news of it."

Then he turns himself to the Emperor, and demands his congé.

" Since go I must, what boots it to delay ?"

Charles with his right hand makes the

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sign of pardon, and then gives him the bâton and a letter.

And so Ganelon returned to his own house, and there he began to equip and prepare himself. And first he bound on his feet his fair golden spurs, and to his side Murgleis, his brave sword—and then he mounted upon his good steed Tachebrun, while his uncle, Guinemer, held his stirrup—the knights of his household all the time praying him, with many tears, that he would take them in his company; but Ganelon answered :

“ Ah, God forbid! Better for me to die alone, than that so many brave knights should die! Return to our sweet France. Salute my wife for me, and Pinabel my peer and friend, and Baldwin my young son. Aid him—serve him—hold him for your lord!”

And thus speaking, he departed, and went on his way.

And soon, as he was riding on, he joined

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the Saracen messengers. They rested there, under a great olive-tree, for Blancandrin had awaited him, and had slackened his pace. Then were words of scorn exchanged between those two.

And Blancandrin it was which spake first.

“ What a marvellous man have we here in this Charles ! Lo ! who but he, has vanquished La Pouille and Calabria ? Who but he, has crossed the seas, and laid the English under tribute to Saint Peter ? But what, I pray, comes he for to seek in this our Spain ? ”

And Ganelon to answer :

“ So ever is it with courage great as his ! Lives not the man that can stand before him ? ”

“ Ay,” replies the other, “ we all know the Frenchmen are brave ! But these Dukes and these Counts, with their counselling ever to ravage, ever to destroy !—But in this they do great wrong to their liege lord.”

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"I know but one such counsellor," quoth Ganelon, "and that is Roland. But he shall rue the day!"

And then he goes on to tell how, once upon a time, before Carcassone, when the Emperor was sitting in the shade, within a meadow, comes this nephew of his before him, he, wearing his euirass, and holding a silver-gilt apple in his hand.—"Look here, fair Sir," cries he to his uncle. "Here! offer I thee the crowns of all the kings of the world."

"This madness of pride will undo him.—Each day doth he expose himself to death.—But, sooner or later, the blow will fall! and then shall we all have peace."

"But this so cruel Roland?" asks Blan-candrin; "this Roland! who would hold at mercy all the kings upon the earth, and be master of their lands—with what aid—and how, shall he prevail?"

"With the aid of the Frenchmen. They

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all love him so, that never will they be found to fail him. All—even to the Emperor, only march as he wills it. He is a man to vanquish the world—ay, from this to the farthest East!"

And so discoursing, they kept riding along, over the ways and over the plains—pledging their faith to compass the death of Roland. And they journeyed onwards, until they at Saragossa arrived—and, there, under the shade of a yew-tree, they lighted them down from their steeds.

The King Marsilio is in the midst of his Saracens. He keeps a mournful silence, waiting uneasily for the tidings brought by the messengers.

"Thou art saved," quoth Blancandrin, advancing to the feet of Marsilio, and holding Ganelon by the hand. "Saved, by Mahomet and Apollyon! whose holy laws we observe! Charles made me no answer, but this noble baron sends he.—From his mouth,

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shalt thou learn, whether it be peace or war."

"Let him speak," answered the King.

Then Ganelon considered within himself a space, and having so done, he thus began:

"May the God, whom we all adore, save thee!—Listen to the will of the puissant Charlemagne! — Thou shalt receive the Christian law—The half of Spain shalt thou hold in fief.—But, refusest thou these terms, taken shalt thou be—in fetters bound—and so be borne to Aix, there to be judged unto the death—a death felon and vile."

But at these words, the King turned pale, and he trembled with choler. His golden javelin shook in his hand—he made as if he would strike it through Ganelon. But they held him back,—and, for Ganelon, he laid his hand upon his sword, and he drew it two fingers' breadth out of the sheath.

"My fair sword!" thus he spake, "So

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long as thou art shining by my side, no man, before mine Emperor, shall say—that in this strange land, I fell alone.—With the blood of the best of them, thou shalt ransom me.”

And then the Saracens to cry out—

“Let us stop the combat!”

So, at their prayer Marsilio grew calm, and he seated himself again in his arm-chair.

“Thou wer’t ill-advised,” said his uncle, the Caliph, “to strike at this Frenchman! Better listen to his words.”

But Ganelon during all this time kept a bold countenance, with his right hand upon the hilt of his sword—and all the spectators to say—

“This is a noble Baron.”

Little by little he approached the King, and took up his discourse again.

“Thou wert in the wrong, to put thyself into a rage.—Our Emperor gives thee the

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half of Spain ! The other half is for Roland,
his nephew—An insolent Compagnon, I allow !
But subscribest thou not to this, most surely
in Saragossa wilt thou be besieged — Thou
wilt be taken, bound, judged, and then,
beheaded,—So saith the Emperor in this
scroll.” And thus saying, the letter placed he
in the hand of the Pagan.

But Marsilio burst forth afresh into rage.
Then he broke the seal, and cast his eyes over
the letter.

“ Charles talks to me of his resentment !
He remembers him of that Basan and Basilio,
whose heads I made fly from their shoulders.
I must needs, to save my life, as it seems,
send him my uncle the Caliph !—Otherwise
none of his friendship for me !”

At these words the King’s son cried
out :

“ Deliver up Ganelon to me !—Let me do
justice on him !”

But Ganelon heard him, and brandished

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his sword—and placed his back against the trunk of a Pine-tree.

And now the scene suddenly changes. The King has descended into his garden; he is become calm and is walking in the midst of his vassals with his son and heir Jurfaleu. He sends for Ganelon who is introduced by Blancandrin.

“ Fair Sir Ganelon,” says the King, “ I have received thee somewhat rudely—I made as if I would strike thee down—To repair my fault, let me present thee with these furs of the marten. Of value more than five hundred livres—Before morning I will give thee what is better still.”

—“ It is not for me to refuse, Sire—And please God, this shall not go without recompense.”

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Marsilio proceeds.

"I pray thee, Sir Count, to hold it for a truth, that I desire to be at amity with thee. And now, maybe, we will speak of Charlemagne.—He is very aged, as it seems to me! I give him at the least two hundred years!—He must be pretty well worn out by this time! So greatly hath he laboured with his body—and in so divers lands—How many blows hath he parried on his shield! How many kings made his bedesmen!—When will he be wearied, think'st thou, of war?"

"Never," quoth Ganelon, "so long as his nephew shall live.—Roland for valour hath not his peer.—No, not hence to the farthest East! A brave one, moreover also is Olivier his Compagnon, also those twelve Peers, so loved of the Emperor!—They march at the head of twenty thousand knights! What should Charlemagne fear?—What would you have?—He is the strongest of men here below!"

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"Fair Sir," replied Marsilio, "I have my army too. A better is not to be seen. I have four hundred thousand knights, ready to give battle to Charlemagne, and his Frenchmen."

"Trust them not—It will cost thee dear, both to thee and to thy men.—Away with this madness of pride, and yield thyself to reason.—Give to the Emperor riches, so great that our Frenchmen shall be confounded thereat. Give him twenty hostages.—Then will he return to the sweet country of France, leaving behind him his rear-guard; where, as I hope the Count Roland his nephew, and the proud Olivier shall be—Trust me, they are as good as dead—so thou but hearken to my words."

"Instruct me, fair Sir,—and may God reward you—how I may slay this Roland?"

"That can I do well.—When once the Emperor hath entered into the defiles of Cisaire, so must he needs leave his rear-guard behind him. There he will have

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placed his proud nephew, and Olivier—for in them he hath great trust.—Twenty thousand Frenchmen will with them be there. Send thou a hundred thousand of thy Pagans—I promise thee not, that at the first encounter—bloody as it may be to those of France—that of thine, great slaughter shall not also be made—but there will ensue a second fight—in one of these two, no matter which, Roland shall be slain. Great deed of valour shalt thou have achieved, and for thy life-long, war no more.—For what can Charles without his Roland? What is it but the right hand of his body, that he shall lose? In what case will then, his, so, renowned army, be? Never more will he call it together! He will forget his love for war—and the great Empire shall rest in peace."

And scarcely had he ended, when Marsilio leapt upon his neck and embraced him—then, without further parley, he bade him swear to destroy Roland.

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“Be it, as thou wilt,” answered Ganelon.
And, upon the relics of his sword, he
swore to the treason, and consummated his
crime.

On his side, Marsilio commanded to bring
the Book of his Law, placed upon an arm-
chair of ivory—the Book of Mahomet it
was—and he swore so he but found Roland
in the rear-guard, to pursue him even unto
the death.

Then stands forth a Saracen, Valdabron
by name, the aged Governor of the King—
he presents his sword to Ganelon. It is the
best in the whole world.

“For the love I bear thee, this I give
to thee—so thou rid us of Roland the
Baron.”

“With all my heart.”—

And they embrace.

A second, Climorin, brings his helmet.

“This casque hath not its peer!—Take it
to aid us against Roland the Marquis.”

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“ Most willingly,” answers Ganelon again.
And they embrace.

So then the Queen Bramimonde drew
near.

“ Much do I love thee, fair Sir,” says she
to the Count, “ for to my lord and all his
thou art greatly dear. Take these bracelets
—they are for thy lady. See the gold, and
the amethysts, and the jacinths ! — More
worth are they than all the treasures of
Rome ! — Not even thy Emperor possesses
their paragon.”

And Ganelon took the jewels.

Then called Marsilio unto Mauduit, his
treasurer :

“ Hast thou made ready the present for
Charlemagne ? ”

“ Sire, all is made ready—seven hundred
camels laden with silver and gold—twenty
hostages of the noblest under heaven.”

Then Marsilio, his hand resting upon the
shoulder of Ganelon, said :

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“ Fair and well hast thou spoken—but, by that law which thou thinkest to be best, beware lest thou change in thy purposes towards us.”

Then he promises to send him every year, as tribute, ten mules laden with gold of Arabia. And he gave him, moreover, the keys of Saragossa, to bear to Charlemagne.

“ But above all, take heed that Roland be in the rear-guard—so may we surprise him in mortal fight.”

And Ganelon to answer :

“ It seems to me, that already I have tarried too long.”

And saying this he mounted his steed and went upon his way.

At dawn of day he arrived at the Emperor’s quarters.

“ Sire,” quoth he, “ I bring thee the keys of Saragossa—much treasure also, and hostages twenty. Guard them surely—for it is from Marsilio that they come.—As for the Caliph,

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if he appear not, be not thou surprised.—With these eyes I saw him embark upon the sea, and three hundred thousand men were with him. He was weary of living under the rule of Marsilio—and came to join himself to the Christians—but four leagues from the shore a horrible tempest surprised him, and hath swallowed them all.—Drowned are they every one and never shallest thou behold them more. Had the Caliph been among the living, him, would I have brought unto thee.—Trust me, Sire, before a month, Marsilio shall have joined thee in France, there to receive our Christian law—yield himself thy vassal, and do to thee homage for the Kingdom of Spain.”

“And so God be praised!” quoth Charles. “Well hast thou done thy message—and good guerdon shalt thou reap therefrom.”

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The clarions sound. Charles proclaims that the war is ended—the soldiers raise the camp; they load the beasts of burden—the army puts itself in motion; they march towards the sweet country of France.

But now the day closes, the night is dark—Charles sleeps. In a dream he beholds the great passes of Cisaire—his lance of good ashen wood is in his hand. Ganelon seizes hold of it and wrests it so, that it breaks in pieces—the fragments fly even to the skies.

The night is gone—the white dawn appears. Charles the majestic Emperor, remounts his steed, and casts his eyes over his army.

“Lords Barons!” thus he spake. “Behold these narrow passes—these dark defiles! To whom—counsel me in this—to whom, shall I give the rear-guard?”

“To whom?” answers Ganelon, “To whom but to Roland, my step-son.—Is there a Baron so valiant?”

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But at these words, the Emperor looked hard at him, and said—

“Thou art a devil incarnate ! What mortal rage possesses thee ?”

Roland came up. He had heard the speech of Ganelon.

“Sir Step-sire,” quoth he, “what thanks do I not owe thee, that thou hast asked for me the rear-guard ?—Be sure, our Emperor shall be no loser thereby.—Nor war-horse nor palfrey—nor mule nor mulêt—nor rozin nor bât-horse, pretend they for to take, but our swords shall ask them, a good price, and more.”

“And so I believe,” said Ganelon.

“Ah !—Son of an accursed race !” cries Roland no longer able to contain his choler. “Thou thinkest, perchance, that it shall fare with me as it hath done with thee—and that the glove shall fall from my hands !” Then turning himself towards the Emperor : “Sire, give me that bracelet which thou bearest

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upon thy wrist.—At least promise I thee it shall not fall to the ground, as with Ganelon!"

The face of the Emperor grew dark—he hesitated to place his nephew in the rear-guard.

But the Duke of Naymes said :

"Give the bracelet to Count Roland. To him the rear-guard of right belongs—for no one can lead it like him."

So the Emperor gave the bracelet to Roland, but, as he did so he called to him and said :

"My fair nephew! Knowest thou what it is that thou desirest? I will leave with thee the half of mine army.—Take it—for trust me, the safe issue shall lie therein."

"No, not I!" quoth Roland. "I will none of it!—God confound me, if I do such dishonour to my race! Leave me twenty thousand valiant Frenchmen, —— ward with all the rest!—Pass th—

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rest in peace—nor, whilst I live, fear face of mortal man.”

Roland mounts his steed. To him joins himself the faithful Olivier, then Gerer, then Beranger, and the aged Anseis, and Gerard de Roussillon, and the Duke Gaifier.

“And I!—I also, will go!” cries Turpin, the Archbishop, “So behoves me to follow my chief!”

“And I also!” cries the Count Gautier, “Roland is my liege lord, and him never will I fail!”

So the vanguard begins its march.

What lofty precipices!—What darksome valleys!—How black the rocks!—How deep the defiles!—The Frenchmen are plunged into a horrible melancholy; as they traverse these passages—The stifled sound of their footsteps is heard for fifteen leagues.

But, when they approach their motherland—in sight of the plains of Gascony,—Oh then! they bethink themselves of their

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fiefs, of their possessions—their tender children, and their noble wives. And the tears spring to their eyes. But to Charles the most of all—for the heart of Charles is heavy. His nephew is left behind amid the mountains of Spain.

He covers his face with his mantle.

“What ails thee, Sire?” quoth the aged Duke Naymes, he, who was riding by his side.

“Can’st thou ask? Who but must groan in spirit—when in dolour such as mine—By Ganelon will France be destroyed. In the visions of this past night an angel hath showed it unto me—He brake my lance between my hands. He it is, who led me to give the rear-guard to my nephew—He it is, through whom in that bad country I did leave him—My God! should I lose Roland!—Never shall I behold his peer.”

And Charles needs must weep—And a hundred thousand men of France breaking forth into tears, shudder as they think of Roland.

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Ganelon ! the felon ! He hath sold him to the Pagan—for gold and for silver, and fine stuffs—for horses, for camels, and for lions.

The King Marsilio hath sent to all the Barons of Spain—Counts, Dukes, and Viscounts, Emirs and sons of Senators. In three days four hundred thousand hath he drawn together ! The drums beat in Saragossa, the image of Mahomet is exposed upon the highest tower. Not a Pagan but is inflamed at the sight. And, lo ! they all set forth. Speeding on through those long valleys—and because of their speed, they soon descry the Gonfalons of France and the rear-guard with the twelve brave Compagnons.

In a wood of pine-trees there, under the shadow of the rocks, the Pagans lie in ambush that night.

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There are four hundred thousand men-at-arms of them.—Ah God ! Woe ! woe !—and the Frenchmen know nothing of it !

The day breaks. It is who, of all the Saracen host, shall strike the first blow. The nephew of Marsilio carakoled before his uncle.

“ Fair Sire, King,” quoth he, his face sparkling with joy—“ I have served thee so well ! In so many and so rude encounters ! Give me for recompense the honour of beating down Roland !”

Twenty others in their turn came vauntingly before Marsilio.—And one says :

“ I will hold my life at a penny’s fee, there at Roncesvalles.—Find I but Roland, all is over with him !—For the Frenchmen what disgrace and dolour !—Their Emperor is so old ! He is doting !—Henceforth every day shall he spend weeping !”

“ Fear not !” cries another, “ Mahomet is stronger than St. Peter !—To Roncesvalles !

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I go to meet Roland ! Surely he shall not escape death ! — Behold my sword ! I will match it against his Durandal — Soon shall we see which is the better !”

A third—

“ Forward, Sire ! Forward ! And behold these Frenchmen die ! We will take Charlemagne and give him up to thee—Of his country will we make thee a present.—Before a year is gone by, France shall we have vanquished and will couch in St. Denis town.”

So whilst thus they vaunt, and excite each other to the combat behind the wood of pine-trees, they finish the harnessing of themselves and invest their Saracen coats of mail. They lace their helmets of Saragossa; gird on their swords of Viennian steel; seize their shields and their Valencian pikes, on which float the pennons, white, scarlet, or blue. Not on mules or palfreys, are they mounted, but on good war-horses, in serried ranks they ride.

The sun shines bright—the gold upon their

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vestments glitters and sparkles.—A thousand clarions begin to sound.

The Frenchmen lend an ear.—

“Sir Compagnon,” quoth Olivier. “It seemeth unto me that with the Saracens we shall have battle to do.”

“God grant it so,” answers Roland. “Let us bethink us of our King—For our liege lord, well doth it become each one to suffer cold or heat, and maybe a scratched skin.—Nay, even to peril his head, if need were! Let all prepare for stalwart blows!—Bethink ye of the songs that will be made upon us!—Christians! the right is on your side,—the wrong is with the Pagan!—Never shall ye find foul exemplar in me!”

Olivier mounts a tall pine-tree—he looks to the right hand. There, up the woody valley, he sees the Saracen host draw nigh.

“Compagnon!” cries he to Roland—“Below there—towards Spain—What tumult!—What noise! God! What white hauberks—What

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flaming crests!—A rude encounter for our Frenchmen! Ganelon! the traitor!—He was ware of it!—The felon!"

"Peace, Olivier," answers Roland. "He is my step-sire.—Speak not of him."

Olivier descends to the ground.

"Lords Barons," quoth he, "I have seen these Pagans—Swarms! Such as eye of man never until now beheld!—The battle is upon us. Such a one hath never yet been seen!—Ask courage of God."

And the Frenchmen to answer:

"Woe to him that flies!—Not one of us but will stand by thee even unto the death."

"Roland, my Compagnon," says the sage Olivier, "these Pagans are in great number, and we are few.—Trust me—better sound thine Horn.—The Emperor will hear it and turn again with his army."

"Takest thou me for a mad man?" cries Roland,—"Wouldst thou have me lose mine honour in the eyes of our sweet France?

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Leave the matter to Durandal!—Leave it to her to strike her good blows, and bathe herself in blood to the very hilt!—These Pagans shall one and all be slain, I promise thee!"

"Roland—my Compagnon—Sound thine Olifant—that the Emperor may hear it and come to us in aid!"

"God preserve me from such cowardice!—Rely on Durandal—Thou shalt see her do justice on those Pagans."

"Comrade—Roland—Sound thine Olifant—The Emperor will hear it and most surely he will return."

"Ah! God forbid it!" was still the answer of Roland. "Man on earth shall never say, that I have sounded for these Pagans!—Such reproach shall never fall upon my race!"

"What reproach?—What meanest thou by this? These Saracens are without number—the earth is covered with them—The valleys, the mountains, the landes, the plains! I have

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seen it — this countless host—and we are but a small company!"

" My courage is all the greater for that," answered Roland—" Neither God nor his angels will suffer it, that through me our France should lose of her fair renown!—Sir Compagnon! my friend, speak to me no more in this sort. We shall stand our ground!—The brunt of the battle shall be to us, for so hath our Emperor willed. And well he knows not one false coward shall be found amid them which he hath entrusted to us. Doth not our Emperor love us for that well to strike we know?—Strike, then! with thy lance, and I, with Durandal—My good sword! That Charles himself bestowed on me!—So if I fall, he who winneth her, may say—This was a brave man's steel."

At this moment the Archbishop Turpin, urging on his steed, ascended a little hillock, and calling the Frenchmen unto him,—“ Lords Barons,” quoth he—“ Here, our Emperor hath

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left us in charge—For him it behoveth us cheerfully to die. Bethink ye that ye are Christians—The battle draws near—ye behold it—There are the Saracens—Call to mind your sins—Cry upon God for mercy—I will absolve ye, for the healing of your souls. Should ye die,—martyrs ye die! and there above, a fair place shall ye find—Yea, among the highest in Paradise.”

From their steeds the Frenchmen descend—and bend their knees to the earth—So the Archbishop blesses them in the name of God.—And for penance he commands them to strike well.

Absolved, and well rid of his sins, each Frenchman remounts his steed.

But was it not a fair sight to behold Roland! Clothed in his brilliant armour mounted upon Valleantif, his noble courser. The golden reins shake in his hand, at the end of his pike which he holds in his clenched fist, floats a white pennon—Forward he goes—the brave one! His

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brow so calm and serene ! After him comes on his brother in arms, then all those noble Frenchmen gathering new courage from him. Upon the Saracen host glances his prideful eye, then—gently turning his head towards his followers :

“ Lords,” sayth he courteously—“ Lords Barons—advance with measured pace—The Pagans rush forwards to their doom.”

And while he was thus speaking the armies drew near—preparing to fall on.

“ A truce to words !” cries Olivier. “ Thou hast not deigned to blow thine Olifant—Nothing more is to be hoped from the Emperor—but no reproach on him ! The brave one !—Little thinks he of what has befallen ! The fault is none of his !—Now Barons !—my Lords—hold firm—and I pray ye for God’s love—let us not fear blows.—Let us give and take—And above all remember the cry of Charlemagne.”

And the Frenchmen shouted “ Montjoie !”

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And he, who had heard that shout had not forgotten it—No, not unto his dying day !

Then they advance—Ah God ! with what courage ! To shorten matters they had spurred forwards their horses—they attack—What was there better to be done—

But the Paynim yields not—and lo ! the “mêlée” begins.

With loud voice and gestures they defy each other. The nephew of Marsilio comes forward—words of insult are upon his lips—He falls upon Roland. Roland with one stroke of his pike pierces his bosom—and down he sinks dead at his feet. Fain would the King’s brother Falsaron avenge his nephew slain, Olivier is beforehand with him.—In his body he plants his lance. A certain Corsablix, one among the barbarian Kings, rides forwards, vomiting forth vauntings and abuse together—Him, hears the Archbishop Turpin, and bears down upon him lance in rest—and there at once he lies slain.

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And each time that a Saracen falls, the Frenchmen to shout, "Montjoie!"

It is the battle-cry of Charlemagne.—

On all sides defiances are given, and combats succeed— And, upon all sides the Frenchmen are conquerors.—Not a Pagan but is overthrown. There goes Roland rushing on with his pike, striking, so long as even the truncheon remains in his hand—but, at the fifteenth blow the wood flies to pieces; and then he draws his trusty sword—his Durandal—His sharp sword! Well doth she know to cleave the Saracen. You should have seen the carnage that he made! How the dead lay in heaps around him! and the blood flowed in torrents over the place. His arms are crimsoned—his horse streaming!

In the "mêlée" who should he espie but Olivier pounding away with the truncheon of his lance upon the skull of the Pagan Falsaron.

"Compagnon!" cries he, "What dost thou

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do there? Iron and steel are needed now!
Where then, is thy sword Haute Claire! with
the hilt of crystal and gold."

"I want time," cries the other—"There is
too much hammering here to do."

Nathless he draws his sword and displays
it to Roland at once, with a stroke well
beseeming a valiant Knight. The Pagan that
he struck falls cloven in twain—The blade
hath divided the gold-embroidered saddle,
and the horse is split even to the chine.

"I hold thee for my brother!" cries Roland
—"Such are the blows the Emperor
loves!"

And upon all sides they shout—"Mont-
joie!"

What horrible confusion!—What blows
taken and given!—What broken and bloody
lances!—What pennons hanging in tatters!
And so many good Frenchmen here robbed of
their young years!—Never more shall they
behold their mothers, nor their wives!—nor

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friends in France, awaiting them beyond the mountains !

And as thus it went on Charlemagne was groaning and sore troubled in spirit—but what was the good of that?—Will weeping aid them?—Woe worth the day! when Ganelon did him that ill turn to bear the message to Saragossa. The traitor!—He shall receive his guerdon. The gallows are preparing for him—but death, in the meantime spares not our Frenchmen. The Saracens fall by thousands of thousands—but ours!—They too die—and the best of them.

At this same hour in France a horrible tempest arose. The winds are let loose, the lightning crackles, the thunder-bolt bursts; the rain and the hail fall in torrents. The earth is shaking from St. Michael of Paris even unto Sens—from Besançon even unto the Port of Wissant! Not a stronghold but the walls are cleaving and cracking! Even at mid-day, all is dark as pitch—No light

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in the heavens but the flash of the lightnings !
—and each man to tremble and say :

“ Surely the end of the world is come !—
Surely the end of the age is at hand !”

Nothing know they of it, at all.

It is the great mourning for the death of
Roland.—

Marsilio who, until now, had held himself apart, saw from far the slaughter that of his was made—then he commanded to sound his horns and his clarions, and the bulk of his army advances.

But when the Frenchmen beheld their enemies — pouring down upon them on all sides, like a flood — Oh then, they began to look around. Where is Roland ?—Where is Olivier ?—Where, the twelve peers ?— Each

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man would fain take shelter behind them.
The Archbishop raises his voice—

“Fore God! Barons fly not! Better die
sword in hand—All is over! And here our
end must be! This day gone by—not one
of us shall be left in the world! But Paradise
is yours! I am your surety for it!”—

At these words their courage was redoubled
and again they cried, “Montjoie.”

But lo! a Saracen—it is the same who
before Marsilio gave the sword and an embrace
to Ganelon, Climorin by name—upon a courser
swifter than the flying swallow bears down
upon Angelier of Bordeaux, and, in his body
he buries the head of his lance. This is the
first Frenchman of mark that has fallen. And
soon hath Olivier avenged him.—With one
stroke of Haute Claire he fells Climorin to
the earth—and the demons carry away his
villainous soul. But Valdabron that other
Pagan, strikes the noble Duke Sancho to the
heart—the Duke falls dead from the stirrup

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—What grief for Roland ! He rushes upon Valdabron and with such a blow, that his head is cloven in twain before the astonished Pagans.

In his turn the Archbishop Turpin makes the African Mancuidant bite the dust—he, who had just slain Anséis. Roland overthrows the son of the King of Cappadocia—but before he fell, what mischief had he done to ours ! The Pagan ! Gérin, and Gérer his companion in arms, hath he slain, and Béranger and Austore and Guy de Saint Antoine.—

Oh ! but our ranks are thinning !—The battle is fiercé and terrible !

Saw ye ever such heaps of slain ! Such wounds ! Such blood !—Flowing over the green grass in streams !—Ours strike with despairing blows !—Four times in the shock the advantage had they—but the fifth !—All ! all ! are fallen dead—save sixty whom God hath spared !

Dearly will those sixty sell their lives.

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When Roland beheld this disaster—

“ Dear Compagnon,” he said to Olivier—
“ How many brave ones here lie slain ! What
loss for our sweet France ! Charles ! our
Emperor, why art thou not here ? My good
brother Olivier what is left to do ?—How give
him tidings of our case ?”

“ There is nothing to be done,” quoth Olivier.
“ Better be slain than shamefully to fly.”

“ I will sound my Olifant !” replies Roland,
“ Charles will hear it in the depths of the
defiles. He will return,—rest thou sure
of it.”

“ Go to—What dishonour !—And thy race,
friend ! Thou hast forgotten it seems, to
think about thy race ! When I spoke yet
awhile, nought would’st thou do—thou shalt do
nothing now—if thou wilt be advised by me.
Thou hast not strength left, to sound thine
Olifant. Behold thy two arms, are they not
both bleeding ?”

“ Are they so ? And good blows have they

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dealt ! But the battle is too strong for us
—I will sound, and Charles will hear.”

“No, that thou shalt not do. And this moreover swear I by my beard, so, behold I again my dear Aude, my noble sister,—never shall she clasp thee in her arms !”

“Wherefore this rage ?” quoth Roland.

“Compagnon !—Thou alone hast caused this ruin. Madness is not courage ! Through thine imprudence is it that these Frenchmen lie slain. Hadst thou but given ear to my words—the Emperor would now be at our side—the battle gained—dead or alive Marsilio taken captive—Roland ! thy rashness hath worked us this loss. Charles ! Our great Charles ! Never shall we serve thee more !”

But the Archbishop Turpin overhears the two friends ; and he runs up to them and cries—

“For God’s love ! let alone this your strife ! Truly too late it is ! too late to sound thine horn — and yet, it were well the

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Emperor should return. Charles will avenge us. These Pagans must not re-enter their Spain! Here, shall our Frenchmen find us, dead and hacked in pieces—Then will they encoffin us, and bear us hence with mourning and with tears—and they will inter us in the burying-grounds of our convents (*moustiers*)—So, at least, we shall not be left a prey unto wolves, or unto dogs, or wild boars—”

“Thou hast well said,” answered Roland—And with that, he put his Olifant to his mouth, and blew and sounded with all his might. Through those long valleys the blast is prolonged—echoing loud. Full thirty great leagues off, the echo repeats itself still.

And Charles has heard it and his army also.

“They give battle to mine,” cries the Emperor—“Roland never sounds his horn but in the thick of the fight.”

“Why dream of battles—” answered

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Ganelon. “From any other mouth such talk would be called a lie—Who does not know Roland? For one single hare, he will go sounding about, a whole day!—On!—Forward! Wherefore make a pause? The land of our dear France is yet far away.”

But Roland continued to sound, till such were his efforts the blood spouted from his lips and sprang from the veins of his forehead.

“That horn hath a prolonged note—” So, said the Emperor—and the Duke of Naymes to answer—

“It is a brave one sounding—The battle is upon him. On my faith, he who hath betrayed him, would fain give us the change—Trust me, let us march to aid thy nephew!—Hearest thou not?—Roland is at bay.”

The Emperor gives the signal. But before he sets forward, he orders Ganelon to be seized; and it is to the scullions of his kitchen that he gives the traitor in charge—They pluck his hair and beard, strike him

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with fist and stick, put a chain about his neck, and lead him up and down as men might do a bear.

At the signal given by the Emperor, every Frenchman turns his steed—they spur them on, plunging with haste into the dark defiles, by the side of the rapid torrents. Charles rides furiously. And, not a Frenchman as he drives onward but sighs and to the next one he says—

“ Might we but find Roland ! So to behold him before he die ! — What blows would we deal together ! ”

Alas ! to what avail ? — They are too far away—they cannot arrive in time !

But Roland cast his eyes around him. He looks to the mountains he looks to the plains—what to see ? — but his Frenchmen expiring on all sides The noble knight ! At once he weeps and prays for them.

“ Lords Barons ! May God have you in His grace ! and open the gates of Paradise

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to your souls, calling you to rest upon the holy flowers!—Better warriors than ye, have I never seen—Long, long, have ye served!—Vanquishing for us so many realms!—Land of France!—Sweet my country!—Behold thee widowed of much brave men! Barons of France! through my fault ye die. Save or shield ye, could I not!—God be your help—The God who never lies—Of sorrow shall I die—though the sword spare me!—Olivier! my brother! let us return to the fight."

And Roland has reappeared in the battle.

As flies the trembling stag before the hound, so before Roland fly the infidels—But now Marsilio appears in warlike guise, overthrowing upon his way Gérard de Roussillon and other brave Frenchmen.

"God give thee damnation!" cries Roland, "for thus striking down my Compagnons," and with a back stroke of Durandal he

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cleaves Marsilio's wrist in twain; then he seizes by his flaxen hair Jurfaleu, son of the King. At this sight the Saracens scream,

"Aid us, Mahomet! Avenge us on these accursed ones!—Never will they give way!
Save yourselves! Save yourselves!"

And at these words one hundred thousand take to flight.

Fear not that they shall return—They have disappeared for ever.—But what availeth it that Marsilio hath fled? His uncle Marganice keeps the field with his black-visaged Ethiopians. He steals behind Olivier—pierces him through the back, and the sword enters into his bosom.

"I have done for one," says he, "Revenge enough for all of ours."

Olivier stricken to death raises his arm, and lets fall Haute Claire upon the helmet of Marganice.—The diamonds which glittered upon it fly on all sides—his head is cloven to the jaws.

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“Cursed Pagan!” cries Olivier—“Neither to thy wife, nor to lady of thy land, shalt thou boast thyself, that thou hast overcome me.”

Then, he calls Roland to his aid.

Roland sees Olivier pale and colourless, with the blood streaming from his bosom. At the sight his spirit fails him, upon his horse he is like to swoon away. Olivier hath not discerned him. So much blood hath he lost that his eyes are being darkened. But his arm which yet will strike, waves round—he lets fall Haute Claire—and the blow descends upon the helmet of Roland.

The casque is cloven to the “nasal,” but the head is not wounded.

At this stroke Roland looks upon his brother, and gently asks him,

“My Compagnon, didst thou do this with purpose? It is I—Roland—Thy dearest friend!—Thou hast not defied me, that I know of.”

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"I hear thee! 'Tis thy voice," said Olivier, "but I cannot see thee—If I have struck at thee, my friend, forgive me."

"Thou hast not done me hurt—I forgive thee my friend—here and before God."

And so saying they bow themselves to each other—and with this tender embrace they are parted.

Roland cannot tear himself from the body of his friend, lying there lifeless, and stretched upon the ground. He looks fixedly on him and weeping recalls with a loud voice the many days passed together in a friendship so perfect. Olivier dead—what a burden is life for him!

But, during this time, and before he was ware of it, save the Archbishop and Gautier, all our Frenchmen had perished. Wounded, but still on their feet, these call for Roland. Roland hears, and flies to their aid—and the Pagans to cry:

The Song of Roland.

“Here come the terrible men! Take heed
lest these three escape alive!”

And then they fall upon them from every side, Gautier dies—Turpin, hath his casque broken, his hauberk pierced—four wounds on his body hath he, and his steed is slain beneath him. Roland bethinking himself of the Emperor, once again seizes his Olifant—but he draws forth a feeble and uncertain sound.

Nevertheless Charles hears it.

“Woe to us!” he said. “Roland! my dear nephew! We shall come too late. I know it by that horn. March—Sound clarions!”

And all the clarions of the army at once to sound.

The blast reaches unto the ear of the Pagans.

“Alas!” say they, “it is Charles returning—It is, the great Emperor. Oh fatal day! All our chiefs lie stretched upon the earth!

The Song of Roland.

If Roland be left alive, the war shall begin again, and our Spain be lost to us at last. Man of flesh shall never compass it to vanquish Roland!—Keep back, and let us assault him with all our missives. Then shall he die—there—there—where he stands.”

Whereupon they hold themselves at distance and rain upon him darts, arrows, lances, and pikes. The shield of Roland is pierced through and through—his scaled hauberk is broken in pieces, yet his body remains untouched—But Valeantif, his good steed, wounded in twenty places, falls dead under his master—

This done, all the Pagans take to flight and gallop full speed towards Spain.

Roland, his horse being slain, cannot pursue. He returns to help the Archbishop. He unlaces his helmet—he binds up his gaping wounds, he presses him to his breast, and tenderly lays him down upon the grass. Then gently he spake to him thus:

The Song of Roland.

"Shall we abandon, without one prayer these our companions here lying dead around us—they whom we loved so much? I will go fetch their bodies, and lay them down before thee."

"Go," answered the Archbishop. "We are masters of the field—go, and quickly return."

And Roland leaves him, and all alone he traverses the field of blood—searching on the mountain, searching in the valley—and he finds them, his brave brothers in arms. The Duke Sanchez, and the aged Anseis, and Gérard, and Béranger—and one by one he raises them and takes them—and lays them at the feet of the Prelate, who blesses them, weeping all the while.

But, when it came to Olivier's turn—when Roland would fain bring the body of his friend—bearing it pressed closely to his heart—Oh! then his face turned pale—all his strength forsook him—and he fell in a swoon upon the ground.

The Song of Roland.

At this sight the Archbishop was seized with a mortal dolour.

In this valley of Roncesvalles is a stream of running water. May he not get some for Roland?—He seizes the Olifant and with trembling steps he strives to drag himself staggering along. He is too weak—he cannot do it. All his strength forsakes him, and face to earth—he sinks down, in the bitterness of death!

Roland recovers himself. He sees the holy warrior there lying upon the ground.—With eyes lifted towards heaven, and joined hands, confessing himself to God, he prays of Him to open the gate of His Paradise to the good soldier of Charlemagne. Then drawing near to the bleeding body of the holy Prelate, he raised his two fair white hands towards heaven, and placing them crossed upon his breast, made, as he did so, his touching adieu.

But now, Roland, in his turn feels death

The Song of Roland.

creeping over him. He prays God for these his peers, beseeching Him to call them to Himself—and, for his own soul, he invokes the aid of the holy angel Gabriel.—Then taking his Olifant, which he will not part from, in one hand, and in the other his Durandal—he climbs an eminence which looks towards Spain, and there upon the green grass, under the shade of a tree—he sinks him down to die.

Not far from the place behind a marble rock a Saracen lying there among the bodies of the slain, his face foul with blood, the better to counterfeit death—spies him out. He sees Roland fall; suddenly he starts up—runs and lays hold of him and cries :

“ Vanquished ! The nephew of Charlemagne !—Vanquished !—To me his sword ! I will bear it even unto Arabia !”

And fain would he draw the sword from the scabbard—but Roland was aware of



The Song of Roland.

somewhat—he opened his eyes, and this was all that he said :

“ It seemeth to me, thou art not one of ours.”

And with that he takes him such a blow upon the casque, with the Olifant, which still was in his hand, that he breaks his skull in sunder and the Pagan fell dead at his feet.

“ Vile miscreant,” quoth he, “ thou wert pretty daring,—Some might say foolhardy, thus to lay hand on me! I have cracked my Olifant however! The gold and jewels are lying all about.”—

And now little by little, he finds that his eyes grow dim. He rises to his feet once more, and strives to rally as he may; but his face is deadly pale.

Six strokes from Durandal he discharges upon a neighbouring rock. He would fain break it—his brave sword! What dolour to leave her to the Pagans! May God deign to spare this reproach unto France!

The Song of Roland.

But the steel slides and breaks not—
Roland strikes again,—this time on a rock
of sardonyx,—Not one notch in the sword!
—He strikes once more, the rock in fragments
flies—the sword remains unhurt!

“Ah, Saint Mary,” he cries—“be my aid!
My Durandal!—So brightly flashing in the
sun!—So fair and so holy! Given unto me
by Charles at command of God Himself!
Thou, through whose might I have conquered
for Charles—Brittany, and Normandy, Maine
and Poictou, Aquitaine and Romagne—
Flanders, Bavaria, Germany, Poland, Con-
stantinople Iceland, Saxony, and England.
Long hast thou been served by the hand of
a valiant man! Shalt thou fall into the
power of a miscreant? Ah, Saint Durandal!
In thy golden pommel what precious relics
lie hid!—A tooth of Saint Peter—Blood
of Saint Basil!—Hair of Monseigneur Saint
Denis!—Vesture of the Virgin Mary!—And
shall a Pagan possess thee?—By a Christian,

The Song of Roland.

a brave Christian alone, it is thy due to be served!"

At these words death creeps on and gains upon his heart. He stretches himself out upon the green grass, laying his sword and his beloved Olifant under him—then, turning his visage towards the Saracen host—so that Charles and his, when they find his body may say—"He died as a conqueror," he strikes his breast, and cries on God for mercy.

And the memory of many things comes over him !

Such fair combats ! His sweet country ! His kindred and lineage ! And Charles ! his liege lord!—who had reared him!—Last, his thoughts turn upon himself !

" My God ! Our true Father ! Thou, who never liest—Thou, who drewest forth Lazarus from among the dead—and Daniel from the tooth of the lion—save my soul ! Snatch it from the peril of those sins which I, in my life, have done !"

The Song of Roland.

And thus saying, his head bending upon his arm—with his right hand he tenders his glove to God—which so, Saint Gabriel receives.

Then, God sends His Angel Cherubim and Saint Michel “du péril”— and, by them and by Gabriel, the soul of the Count—to Paradise is borne away.

Charlemagne has re-entered the valley of Roncesvalles.

Not a way, not a path, not an inch of ground! but on it lie the dead. With loud voice Charles calls upon his nephew, calls upon Olivier, calls upon the Archbishop—and Gérer, and Béranger, and the Duke Sanchez, and Angelier, and all his peers,—to what avail?

The Song of Roland.

There is no answer!—There will never be answer again.

“Wherefore was I not at this battle,” he cries, tearing his long beard, and wild with despair.

And all the army to mourn and lament itself with him!

These weep their sons—these their brothers—their nephews, their friends—their liege lords!

In the midst of this great mourning, comes the Duke Naymes, like a wise man as he is, to the Emperor.

“Look before thee,” he says. “Behold that great dust—It is the Pagan host escaping! To horse! We must have revenge!”

But Charles before he set forward called unto him four barons and commanded that with a thousand knights, they should keep the battle-field.

“Leave the dead there as they lie,” said

The Song of Roland.

he. "Drive away all beasts of prey—but let no one, squire nor varlet touch the slain till such time as, God willing, we return."

Then he commanded to sound the charge and to pursue the Saracens.

The sun sinks, the night approaches, the Pagans are about to escape under cover of the darkness—but an angel has descended from heaven.

"Forward," says he to Charles, "Ever forward—the light shall not fail thee."

And the sun stands still.

The Pagans fly, the Frenchmen overtake, and overcome, and massacre. In the swift floods of the Ebro they perish who take to flight. Charles descends from his steed and falls prostrate on his face rendering thanks to God.

But when again he arose, the sun had set. Too late was it to return to Roncesvalles; and the army it was sinking with fatigue. Charles mourning in spirit, weeping for Roland and

The Sang of Roland.

his brave companions, ends at last by falling to sleep.—All his warriors have laid themselves down upon the grass and they are sleeping around him. The very horses too weary to stand, are browzing the herbs as they lie.

During the night, Charles, guarded by the holy angel watching at his pillow, beholds in a vision the times to come; and the rude battle which so soon must be.

Meanwhile Marsilio wearied and mutilated at length hath reached Saragossa.

Loud shrieked the Queen when she beheld her lord. And wept and cursed at the wicked gods who thus had him betrayed—One hope alone remains—the Emir of Babylon, he, the aged Baligant—he will not leave them without aid.—He will come to avenge them.

Long time since had Marsilio written him — but Babylon is far off and there hath been much delay !

The Song of Roland.

But the Emir had received the missives. He had sent to the governors of his forty kingdoms, he has commanded to equip his galleys, and has assembled them in the port of Alexandria. When came the month of May, when came the first day of summer, then did he put to sea.

This fleet! But it is great! How it obeys to the sail! the oar! the rudder! At the summit of her masts—at the end of her long yards what flames are there not burning! The sea glitters therewith amid the darkness of night. And when they approach the shores of Spain the coasts are, as it were, on fire.

The news reaches Saragossa.

Marsilio in his sore straits, yields himself to the Emir Baligant, to do unto him homage for Spain. With his left hand, his only one—he tenders his glove.

“Prince Emir,” said he, “to thee I yield up my lands—defend them and give me revenge!”

The Song of Roland.

So the Emir received the glove, and pledged his faith to bring him the head of the aged Charles—and he sprang to horse crying to his Saracens :

“ Forward—Forward—The Frenchmen will escape us.”

Charles at the dawning of day, had taken the road to Roncesvalles.

“ Lords,” said he to his, as he drew nigh to the battle-field, “ Slacken your steps a while: Leave me alone to go seek my nephew. On a certain day—I remember it well—being at Aix at a feast he spake to us, thus saying—that should he die in foreign lands—in advance of his followers and his peers, his body should there be found—with face turned to the foeman’s soil—and thus he would die —The Brave One!”

And he ended his words and went forward alone, and so he mounted the hill. And there found he, upon three rocks, the strokes of Durandal, and hard by, upon



The Song of Roland.

the green grass, the body of his nephew was lying.

“Friend Roland!” cried he in sore anguish of spirit and lifting up the body with his hands “God give thy soul rest amongst His glorious saints—upon the flowers of Paradise! Alas! What for, didst thou come unto Spain! For me henceforth, there shall not pass a day but I will weep for thee!—I have no friend left under Heaven! Kinsmen may I have, but not one like thee!—Friend Roland, I am about to return to our France. When at Laon, in my palace, I shall be arrived they will come from all sides saying unto me—‘Where, then, is the great Captain?’ And I, to answer ‘He is dead in Spain.—He is dead! my nephew!—Vanquisher of so many lands for me!’ And now who will command my armies? who sustain my Empire? France my sweet country — thyself in him lies slain!”

And, when he had thus given vent to his

The Song of Roland.

grief, his Barons prayed of him to command that the last offices should be rendered to their companions in arms. So they gathered up the dead, and burned perfumes, and blessed them, and incensed them, and buried them with great pomp. All but Roland, Olivier and the Archbishop Turpin. Their bodies, they placed together, and set them aside to be carried into France.

Then they prepare themselves to depart, but lo! the vanguard of the Saracens appears. The Emperor tears himself from his sorrowful thoughts, proudly turneth he to his, and cries, with a loud and noble voice :

“Barons of France! To horse!—To arms!”

And the army prepares for battle.

Charles disposes the order of fight. He forms six cohorts, giving to each a chief well experienced and brave—then he places himself at their head. By his side Geoffrey of Anjou displays the oriflamme; Guinemaut bears the Olifant.

The Song of Roland.

Charles descends from his steed, prostrate before God he falls, and proffers an ardent prayer—then he remounts his horse, he seizes his shield and mace, and with serene visage rushes on.

The clarions sound—high above the clarions echoes the blast of the Olifant. The men-at-arms weep as they hear it—

They are thinking of Roland.

On his side the Emir has passed his Saracens in review. He, also, he disposes them in cohorts, thirty of these there are, the warriors puissant and brave. Then he calls upon Mahomet, and displays his standard, and runs with mad pride, to the renounter with the Frenchmen.

Terrible is the first shock. The blood streams in floods on either side. Till evening the fight is maintained, and the carnage increasing goes on—but, towards the close of the day, as the twilight draws nigh, Charles and the Emir encounter.

The Song of Roland.

They meet—and terrible are the blows which ensue. Soon their girths break—their saddles turn—they are on foot. Filled with rage, they draw their swords—and a combat unto death is between them.

Charles is being borne down. Stunned with a blow which clove the crest of his helmet, he reels, he is nigh to falling!—But, close by his ear the holy voice of the Angel Gabriel is heard, crying,

“Great King—what doest thou?”

At the voice his vigour returns, and beneath the sword of France, the Emir is stricken down and slain.

Then the army of the Pagans took to flight, and our Frenchmen pursued unto Saragossa.

The town was taken—Marsilio, he, died in despair.

Great war made the conquerors against the false Gods, with heavy blows of their maces they broke the idols down. They

The Sung of Roland.

baptized the Saracens. More than one hundred thousand are baptized—Do any resist?—they burn or hang them. All, save the Queen Bramimonde, her, they will carry to France; Charles wills that she in gentle fashion be converted.

So Vengeance was satisfied. A garrison was placed in the town and the rest all returned to France.

And passing through Bourdeaux, there, upon the altar of Saint Severin, did Charles depose the Olifant of his nephew—and there pilgrims may behold it lying even unto this day.

Then in large boats he traversed the Gironde—and there, in Saint Romain de Blaze, he buried the proud Roland, the faithful Olivier, and he, the brave Archbishop.

Nowhere else would Charles tarry upon the road—No repose will he take till he reaches Aix—Aix his great city. Lo! there he is arrived; and he sends forth messengers to all his provinces and kingdoms, and summons

The Song of Roland.

the peers of his court of justice, to make ready for the trial of Ganelon.

But entering into his palace, who should he see coming to meet him—but Aude—the beautiful Aude—“la gente demoiselle.”

“Where is Roland?” says she. “Roland the Great Captain—who hath sworn to make me his wife?”

At these words Charles feels all his mortal anguish return—plenteously he weeps with warm tears.

“My sister! My dear friend! He, of whom you speak is no more! But I swear to give thee in exchange a spouse worthy of thee. Louis my son!—What can I say more? He is my son—of all my kingdoms heir!”

“These are strange words,” says she—“God forbid! and all his saints—and all his angels too, that Roland dead, Aude should remain among the living.”

And with that, she turns pale, and sinks down at Charlemagne’s feet.

The Song of Roland.

She is gone for ever ! God have mercy upon her soul !

Fain would the Emperor persuade himself that she had only swooned. He takes her by both hands, he raises her up—the head alas ! sinks upon the shoulder !

For truly she is dead—and four Countesses are sent for to watch over her throughout the night, and see her nobly interred in a convent of nuns (“Moustier de Nonnains.”)

While thus they are weeping for the beautiful Aude—while thus Charles is rendering her the last honours—Ganelon charged with fetters—beaten with rods, is awaiting his judgment.

The Peers are called together—Ganelon stands before them. He defends himself with subtlety.

“I revenged myself,” say he—“but I did not betray.”

The Judges regard him, and incline to mercy.

“Sire,” say they to the Emperor, “Let him live—He is a good gentleman ; his death

